



National Weather Service News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE COMPLETES NOAA WEATHER RADIO EXPANSION/UPGRADE FOR NORTHERN ILLINOIS

Chicago, IL – The National Weather Service (NWS) has installed 3 new NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) transmitters in northern Illinois; a 1000 watt transmitter near Lockport, a 300 watt transmitter near Kankakee, and a 300 watt transmitter near Dixon. In addition, the old Chicago Sears Tower 500 watt transmitter and split antenna system was replaced with a new 300 watt transmitter and 6 degree down-tilt antenna. Finally, the 1000 watt transmitter at Oregon will be moved to Rockford. The NWR network will now provide virtually 100% coverage to northern Illinois. Many locations will have overlapping coverage.

Weather radio provides a continuous broadcast of weather information. Severe weather watches and warnings can be received through the radios, directly from the NWS, with a special tone alert feature. The tone alert will activate the radio and set off a loud alarm, even if the radio is turned off. Newer models with Specific Area Message Encoder (SAME) capability can be programmed to only alarm for a specific county or group of counties. Radios can be purchased at electronics stores, departments stores, through catalogs, and over the internet for \$30 to \$80.

The upgrade of the Sears Tower equipment and the addition of the Lockport station now provides nearly overlapping coverage of much of the Chicago metropolitan area and southern Lake Michigan. Because of this duplication, the Sears Tower station will become primarily a marine broadcast for commercial shipping, and recreational boaters from the Illinois and Indiana shores of southern Lake Michigan out to mid-lake. There will also be forecasts, watches and warnings for people in the lakeshore counties of Lake IL, Cook, Lake IN and Porter. The new Lockport station, along with the existing station at Crystal Lake, will provide complete weather information and severe weather warnings for the Chicago metropolitan area. These inland stations will provide only limited, seasonal marine information, mainly for suburban recreational boaters who may be planning a trip to Lake Michigan.

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People with older model 3-channel weather radios (162.400, 162.475, 162.550) will need to purchase newer 7-channel radios to receive the broadcasts from some of the new stations (162.425, 162.450, 162.500, 162.525).

Other changes to the NWR broadcasts throughout north central and northeast Illinois and northwest Indiana include;

- additional local weather reports, and the elimination of many distant reports in hourly weather round-ups
- addition of river stage information for recreational interests on the Rock, Pecotonica, Illinois, and Kankakee Rivers (seasonal).
- realignment of tone alert areas to provide the best possible coverage for each county

These changes are expected to take place by October 15, 2001.

The following table shows counties/areas that will be tone alerted by each NWR transmitter in north central and northeast Illinois and northwest Indiana;

ID	Location	Frequency	Power	Tone alert activation
KZZ-57	Rockford	162.475	1000W	Winnebago, Boone, Ogle, Lee, DeKalb
KXI-41	Crystal Lake	162.500	300W	McHenry, Lake, Kane
KZZ-55	Dixon	162.525	300W	Carroll, Ogle, Whiteside, Lee
KXI-58	Plano	162.400	300W	DeKalb, Kane, Kendall, LaSalle
KZZ-81	Lockport	162.425	1000W	Kane, DuPage, Cook, Kendall, Grundy, Will, Lake IN, Porter IN
KWO-39	Chicago (Sears Twr)	162.550	300W	Lake IL, Cook, Lake IN, Porter IN, southern Lake Michigan
WXK-24	Odell	162.450	1000W	LaSalle, Grundy, Livingston, Ford, Marshall, Woodford
KZZ-58	Kankakee	162.525	300W	Kankakee, Lake IN, Newton IN
KXI-86	Crescent City	162.500	300W	Ford, Iroquois, Newton IN, Benton IN

These tone alert areas may be adjusted based on signal strength surveys and customer feedback.

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